

Thought for Today: August 13, 2007

Psalm 15 (NASB)

**O LORD, who may abide in Your tent?
Who may dwell on Your holy hill?
He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness,
And speaks truth in his heart.
He does not slander with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,
Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;
In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
But who honors those who fear the LORD;
He swears to his own hurt and does not change;
He does not put out his money at interest,
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.
He who does these things will never be shaken.**

If you, like me, have ever tried to come up with a definition for God, you've probably ended up disappointed. No matter how hard we try, we just can't fully define what it is to be God. This does not mean, however, that we shouldn't try to come to a fuller understanding of who God is and what God is like. In Psalm 15, the psalmist does not try to define God at all. He does, however, base his psalm on his knowledge that the Lord God is holy.

One simple definition for holy is "set apart, uncommon, undefiled." If we believe that these terms describe God—and I believe that they do—then we, like the psalmist, should ask, Who can be in God's presence? If God is holy, then nothing common or profane can reside with Him. This means that we have to live uncommon lives. We should aim for integrity, righteousness, and truthfulness in everything we do. Whether we are at home, on the job, or out and about, our goal is to live in a way that keeps us in God's presence.

In Psalm 15, the psalmist gives a number of specific examples of things to pursue and things to avoid. The characteristic that stands out is the place of self in the life of a righteous person. The righteous always put themselves last. It may not sound glorious or fulfilling, but this is the lifestyle that keeps us in God's presence. When I was a little child, some Bible school teacher taught me that the way to have JOY is to put Jesus first, Others second, and Yourself last. That little saying has stuck with me for all these years, and I think it's good advice. I also think that it captures some of the insight of this great psalm. We just need to do what we know is right and live lives of uncommon, self-sacrificing love, because God did this for us.

In Him,
Patrick Barber